

## **Heartburn**

### **What is heartburn?**

Heartburn is a type of indigestion that normally occurs when stomach acid moves up into the oesophagus/throat.

### **Symptoms**

- Burning sensation in the centre of the chest
- Acid taste at the back of your throat
- Small bits of food coming back up in your mouth
- These symptoms usually occur after a meal or when you lie down or bend over.

### **Causes**

- Smoking
- Alcohol use
- Being overweight or obese
- Eating large meals before bedtime
- Certain medication
- Caffeine and carbonated drinks

### **Self-help measures**

- Try to stop smoking.
- Try to lose weight. Heartburn often stops when weight is back to normal.
- Eat smaller portions and consume alcohol in moderation.
- Avoid spicy, fatty foods, citrus, tomatoes and carbonated drinks.
- Avoid medication that worsens heartburn (eg ibuprofen, aspirin).
- Eat a few hours before going to bed.
- Do not wear tight clothes around your stomach.
- Use OTC (over-the-counter) antacids to reduce heartburn.

### **When to see a medical practitioner**

Most people do not need investigations, but if your symptoms are uncontrolled and do not improve with medication, please consult a doctor or health care provider.

### **Compiled by Student Health Services**

NIDDK: <https://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/diseases/pubs/gerd/index.aspx>

## Self-assessment tool: Heartburn

Have you ever been diagnosed with heartburn/indigestion?	Yes	No	
Do you suffer from frequent heartburn?	Yes	No	Sometimes
Do you have an acidic taste in your mouth?	Yes	No	Sometimes
Does the heartburn prevent you from sleeping through the night?	Yes	No	Sometimes
Does the heartburn require you to take daily medication?	Yes	No	Sometimes
Are the symptoms frequent and painful?	Yes	No	Sometimes
Do you eat large meals before bedtime?	Yes	No	Sometimes
Do you eat spicy, fatty foods regularly?	Yes	No	Sometimes

If you answer yes to two or more of the above questions, please visit your doctor or health care provider for further investigation.